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DEC 20 1984

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name Public School No. 19

historic Public School No. 19

and/or common St. Hedwig's High School

2. Location

street & number 801 South Harrison Street not for publication

city, town Wilmington vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Delaware code 10 county New Castle code 003

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name J & B Enterprises C/O Rosehill Builders

street & number 13 Rizzo Avenue

city, town New Castle vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, 4th Floor

street & number City/County Building, 800 French St.

city, town Wilmington state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Cultural Resources Survey  
title of Wilmington, Delaware has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date May, 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of Planning, City of Wilmington, 800 French St.

city, town Wilmington state Delaware

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered

altered

**Check one**

original site

moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Public School No. 19 or St. Hedwig's School occupies a 140' square lot at the southwest corner of South Harrison and Oak Streets. Italianate in style, the overall form of the building is a Greek cross with its east and west arms slightly shorter than the other two. By 1881, when the school was built, the style was well past the peak of its popularity for domestic architecture. G. Graham, its architect, undoubtedly considered it to be conservative enough for a public school.

The walls of this two story building are brick laid in common bond. A brick water table defines the height of the basement ceiling; below it the short basement windows have segmentally arched tops and are covered with iron grills. In typically Italianate style the low roof is hipped near the center of the building and ends in gabled pediments on three facades. It now has a modern shingle covering.

The building's most important facade is on the arm of the cross which faces east and is three bays wide. The outside bays contain one window on each floor. These windows have stone sills and segmental arches at the top. The sash is an aluminium replacement too short for the original openings, and plain aluminium siding fills the top third of each opening. A brick hoodmould tops each window. The central bay contains a pair of long, slender window openings on each floor. Brick now fills these openings on the first floor and those on the second floor have received the same aluminium sash treatment mentioned above. The hoodmoulds in the central bay all have stone keystones. A stone plaque at the height of the second floor states that this is Public School No. 19, built in 1881. Above the second floor a heavy wood pediment is trimmed with elongated dentils and bracketed cornice returns. The brackets here as elsewhere on the building are set in pairs; they are thick scrolls with an incised floral design on their sides. Below the peak of the pediment is a small arch-topped window filled with louvers. It has a stone sill and brick hoodmould.

The building is distinctly cruciform in shape, but to the casual viewer the facade described above combines with the wings extending from its sides and almost appears to be the slightly projecting central pavillion we

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1881 **Builder/Architect** G. Graham and Son

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Public School No. 19 was built in 1881 as a primary school to serve the children of Wilmington's 11th Ward. The population of the area expanded along with the city's industries, and the city extended its boundaries to include the 11th Ward at the time the school was built. In more recent history the building housed St. Hedwig's High School which was operated by St. Hedwig's Church, Wilmington's Polish Roman Catholic Parish. Therefore, the school is significant under criterion A, because it was associated with Wilmington's expansion and subsequent need for additional schools, events that have contributed to the broad patterns of local history. Public School No. 19 is also significant under Criterion C because it was designed by a local architect, G. Graham & Son who selected a cruciform shape executed in the Italianate style. The building is the city's third oldest extant school, is in excellent condition, and represents an architectural advance in local 19th century school architecture.

Public School No. 19 stands on the southwest corner of Oak and Harrison Streets. It occupies a lot that the Wilmington Board of Public Education purchased on October 25, 1881 from the Christiana River Improvement Company. This real estate holding company belonged to Joshua T. Heald a local developer whose projects included hundreds of houses, the Delaware Avenue street car line, and railroad investments. In the course of these activities he acquired large tracts of land in and around Wilmington. Heald's company sold this particular 140' x 140' lot with another lot for a combined price of \$4,500. This lot was then just outside the city limits in a developing area that the city annexed in the spring of 1881.

The 11th Ward included Browntown, a neighborhood which would eventually be home for many Polish-Americans. Polish immigrants arrived in Wilmington in the late 19th century to work in the city's growing industries. Many of them moved into the Browntown area, and in the 1890s St. Hedwig's Church was erected to become the city's Polish Roman Catholic parish. Polish-Americans were not the only residents of the area, but their influence on the neighborhood and its school was strong.

The Wilmington public schools had started out as a part of the state-wide free school system, and it was not

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Wilmington City Directory, 1881-2; 1899; Wilmington Board of Education Report 1882-83; Reed, H. Clay, Ed. Delaware, A History of the First State, New York, 1947; Every Evening History of Wilmington, Every Evening Co. 1894; Morning News, March 23, 1960;

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .45 acres

Quadrangle name Wilmington South

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	8	4	5	1	2	8	0	4	3	9	8	5	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

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D 

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E 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Corner lot at southwest intersection of Oak and South Harrison Streets, lot is 140' on all sides forming a square.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Priscilla M. Thompson

organization The History Store

date August 20, 1984

street & number 418 North Union Street

telephone (302) 654-1727

city or town Wilmington

state Delaware

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national     state     local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*John R. Kern*

title Director; Division of Hist. & Cultural Affairs

date October 31, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*John Pelores Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

12-20-84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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frequently see in Italianate houses. Two entrances to the building are in the side walls of the east arm of the cross. These doors have slightly arched transoms, and there is a window above each on the second floor.

The north and south arms of the cross are alike, and the pediment at the top of each is like that on the front of the building. The side walls are each two bays wide, and the third side is four bays wide. The window treatment is similar for the entire building. Here the windows sills are also stone, but the openings are topped with brick relieving arches rather than with hoodmoulds. The small window in the peak of the pediment is a semi-circle filled with louvers.

The arm of the cross which extends to the west or the rear of the building is obviously the least important because there is no pediment above it; it is topped by a bracketed cornice. The west wall is three bays wide like the front, but the central bay here has one large arched opening midway between the two floors. The windows here also have the simpler trim of the north and south arms of the cross. There are entrance doors in each of the side walls.

Two chimneys, now covered with stucco, extend through the roof in the central part of the building. A small square cupola with a pyramidal roof rises from the roof of the south wing. It shows on the 1901 Sanborn Atlas and appears to have been the school's bell tower - the school house version of the lantern which topped many Italianate dwellings.

A small one story passageway with a flat roof connects the main building to a rectangular one story building with hipped tin roof at the rear. This is a turn of the century addition whose construction coincided with the disappearance of two privies that originally stood at the rear corners of the lot. A large portion of the lot has now been made into paved parking space for the offices which occupy the building. However, there are mature trees and a lawn at the front of the property. All is surrounded by iron hairpin fence that stands on a stone wall at the front of the lot.

The building is no longer used for a school. In 1960 alterations made the old primary school into a Catholic

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High School, and recent alterations created offices. However, much of the original room definition and detail remains. The wings extending to the east and west are stair towers on the inside. Each contains an open well, three-run staircase with square newels, turned balusters, and simple brackets. A wainscoat of vertical beaded boarding on the stair wall echoes the course of the handrail. There is a small room at either side of the stairs on the second floor, and what were probably originally cloak rooms on the first floor.

The main classroom arrangement on the first and second floors were certainly identical at one time. They have been slightly altered with conversion to modern offices but there is enough of the original fabric remaining to identify its layout and finish. A wide corridor runs from east to west between the two staircases. There are two large classrooms on each side of the corridor making four on each floor or eight altogether. Each room is 32 1/2' by 20 1/2' with 13' ceilings. Dropped ceilings have now been installed covering the original tin ceilings. The shape of the building allows each of these large classrooms to have windows on two sides. Originally, there was no artificial light in the building.

In addition to the large classrooms, there were smaller rooms in the stair towers and an office for the principal. The Wilmington Board of Education Report of 1882-3 described School No. 19 as having eight rooms for study and recitation, a small recitation room, and other small rooms making seats for 432 pupils. Many of the classrooms still have vertical beaded boarding wainscoat, wood floors, and blackboards. Many of the original doors remain inside the building; they have six recessed panels surrounded by chamfered edges. There are transoms above most of the doors which have moulded frames.

The school was built with a steam heater for which the Board of Education paid \$1619. to A. Speakman, a local firm. Electricity was installed in the early 20th century.

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until 1852 that the city had its own Board of Public Education with the power to build and regulate schools. Judge Willard Hall served as President of the Board of Education for most of its first eighteen years. When he retired William S. Hilles became president of the Board which hired David W. Harlan as its first professional Superintendent of Schools in 1871. Harlan held that post for nineteen years exerting a strong influence on school construction and operation. Harlan was Superintendent when Public School No. 19 was built.

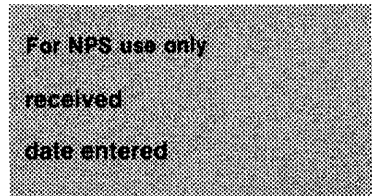
The building committee for school No. 19 included William J. Morrow, William W. Lobdell, Jonathan Hilton, William F. Forsythe, and Charles Baird. This committee selected G. Graham & Son, a local architectural firm to design the new primary school. Graham's offices were at 220 Market Street, and his advertisement in the 1881-1882 Wilmington City Directory showed a design for a large Second Empire style house on which he claimed to have a patent. The advertisement stated that the firm was "prepared to furnish Plans, Designs, and Specifications for public and private buildings of every description." The Grahams lived at 500 West 5th Street in a house which is still standing in the Quaker Hill Historic District.

Construction on School No. 19 commenced in 1881 and was completed in 1882. Graham's design was in the shape of a Greek cross, with two of the arms slightly shortened. This shape permitted each floor to have four large classrooms with windows on two walls. There was no artificial lighting in the building, so this design permitted much more natural light than the earlier rectangular Romanesque design of Wilmington schools. The Italianate style was slightly out of date when Graham designed School No. 19, but he may well have thought it was conservatively appropriate for a primary school. In any case, it adapted well to Graham's overall plan which incorporated many features we might want in a school today. The School has a large open stairway at opposite ends of the building, the central corridor is wide and relatively short, the classrooms are light, and there are four entrances to the building.

Although there was no interior plumbing and no artificial lighting, the building did have steam heat.

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Furthermore, the Board of Education's Report of 1882-3 boasted that the school had direct and indirect radiation, good ventilation, and new furniture. It had seating for 432 pupils, a rather large number for its eight 32 x 20 foot classrooms, and a few smaller rooms. The Board placed a value of \$ 20,000 on School No. 19, making it one of the more valuable schools at the time.

The costs for the school as listed in the Board's Report tell something about its construction:

Lot	\$ 1521.00
H. Emmons, Searches	35.75
Engineer & Surveying	8.00
P. Chandler, Contractor	11743.00
G. Graham & Son, Architect	250.00
P. Chandler, Extras	57.00
Gawthrop & Bros, Paving, etc.	458.12
A. Speakman, Steam Heater	1619.00
E. Forrest, iron railing	254.37
G.W. Bush & Son	3.10
James H. Floyd	11.75
Cleaning Building & Painting	
Fence	48.00
John Dolan, Laying out walks, sodding, etc.	186.75
Wm. M. Kennard, carpets	40.60
Keystone Furniture	1043.12

The contractor who built the school was Philemma Chandler, who lived at 1321 West 8th Street, a house which is still standing today. Chandler did not advertise in the City Directory, and he gave his home as his business address. The other individuals and firms who provided services and materials for school No. 19 were from Wilmington and the business descendants<sup>2</sup> of two, Speakman and Kennard, are still in business today.

Public School No. 19 was a primary school containing the lowest grades in the school system. Primary Schools far outnumbered other schools in the late Nineteenth century in Wilmington. In 1894, for instance, the city had one high school, four grammar schools, and 19 primary schools. At that time the large majority of the teachers were women. Of the 199 teachers in the entire system there



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were five men,<sup>3</sup> who taught in the high school; all the others were women. In 1899, Rebecca Brown, the principal of School No. 19 received \$600 per year, the other teachers in the school received from \$365 to \$ 450, and the janitor received \$ 250 per year. David W. Harlan,<sup>4</sup> the Superintendent of Schools received \$2000 annually.

In Wilmington, Delaware, Portrait of an Industrial City 1830-1910 Carol E. Hoffecker writes about the improvements in Wilmington schools up to the early twentieth century. She points out that only 20% of those who attended primary school went on to grammar school in the 1870s, and a smaller percentage went on to high school. The need for children to work to supplement family income was probably a major reason for not attending school. In addition, it was not until the twentieth century that Delaware enacted a compulsory school attendance law. Even after the law was passed, there was little enforcement. The law's requirement, 100 days of school attendance per year until age 14, could also be lowered by local governments to as little as three months per year. In 1919 Wilmington appointed truant officers in an attempt to enforce attendance, but they had only limited success in making certain that all children attended school.<sup>6</sup> As a primary school No. 19 would have had a relatively heavy attendance.

In summary, a Wilmington education was very different in 1882 when School No. 19 was built than it is today. However, despite truancy, low salaries for teachers, lack of indoor plumbing and lighting No. 19 was quite modern for its time. Its light airy rooms, central heating, and well-designed exterior made it superior to many other local schools. In the early twentieth century the two outdoor privies (presumably one for boys and one for girls) had been replaced by indoor bathrooms, one of the few major changes in the original building.

In the 1920s Delawareans became aware of the need for statewide reforms in their educational system which still included one-room rural schools and city schools without plumbing and lighting. It is a tribute to its superior design that Public School No. 19 continued to

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operate without radical changes. However, as an enlightened public began to expect public schools to provide education for everyone from elementary through high school, the school population multiplied. To meet the increasing need, Wilmington needed not only more schools, but larger ones constructed on a different design with many more classrooms and facilities for athletics, music, art, and academics.

On October 21, 1959 the Board of Public Education deeded School No. 19 to the Mayor and Council of the City of Wilmington. According to the Morning News of March 23, 1960 the Mayor and Council leased "the old red brick structure" to St. Hedwig's Church for five years. The church was renovating "old 19" so that it could become a Catholic High School. The church repainted the school, refinished its floors and halls, and installed new laboratory equipment and a library. 150 pupils had enrolled in the new high school before it opened.

St. Hedwig's High School, like some other Catholic schools in the 1970s, found that there were no longer enough teaching nuns to staff it. Therefore, rather than operate with lay teachers, the church decided to close the high school. In 1982 the current owners purchased the building which they have altered only slightly to create offices.

Public School No. 19, often called St. Hedwig's School locally, is an example of a type of school which will never be built again. It is an architecturally significant link between the primitive schools of the early nineteenth century and the large consolidated schools of the early twentieth century. It is a landmark in its neighborhood which became a part of the city when the school was built; it is a reminder of an earlier day when the community primary school was an important part of everyone's education and for some, their only education.

1. Wilmington City Directory for 1881-2, advertising section following p. 240A
2. Wilmington Board of Education Report 1882-1883, p. 72
3. Every Evening History of Wilmington p. 12
4. Wilmington City Directory 1899, Introduction on Public Services

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5. Wilmington, Delaware, Portrait of an Industrial City.  
Carol E. Hoffecker. p. 92
6. Reed, H. Clay, ed. Delaware, A History of the First State p. 699-700
7. Registry of Deeds, City of Wilmington.
8. Morning News March 23, 1960
9. conversation with parish member, William Kapa

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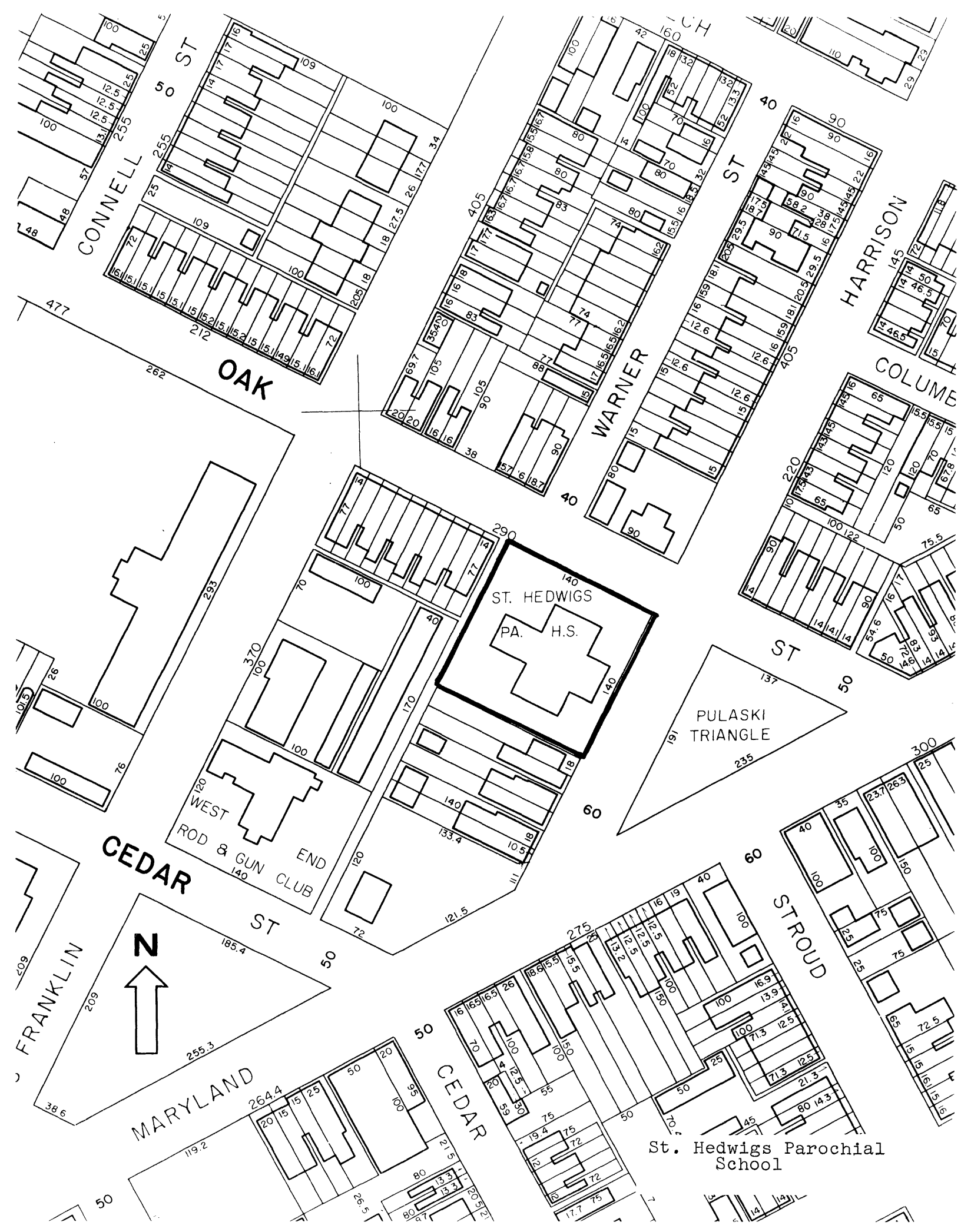
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ST. HEDWIG'S HIGH SCHOOL

Bounded on the north by Oak Street, on the east by Harrison Street, on the south by a line 140 feet south of and parallel to the southerly side of Oak Street, and on the west by a line 140 feet west of and parallel to the westerly side of Harrison Street.



St. Hedwigs Parochial School

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Go to Ferris Bros., Printers,  
No. 10 E. Third St.

Xerox copy of pages from Wilmington  
City Directory 1881-2 showing  
advertisement of C. Graham & Son

erate

and uniform prices,

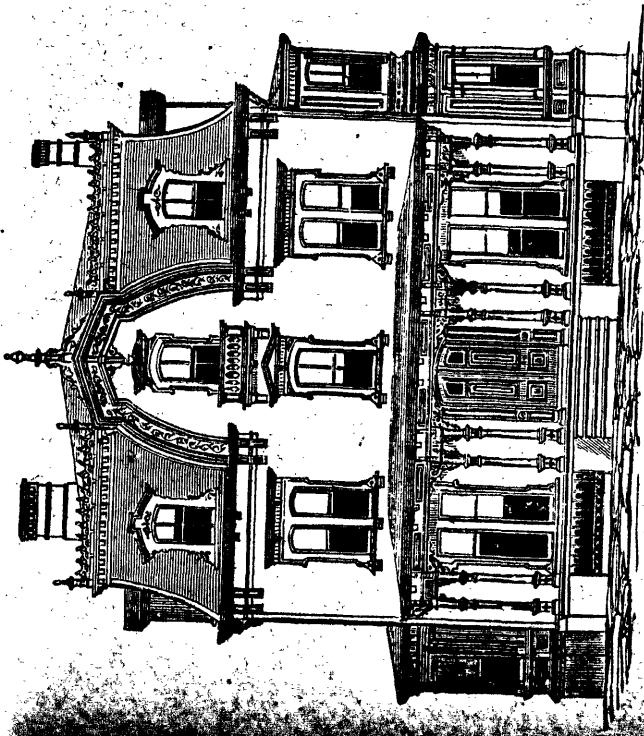
**Go to Ferris Bros., Printers**

No. 10 East Third Street,  
Wilmington, Delaware.

For Lithographing,

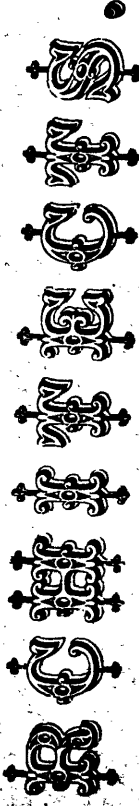
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